

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8466

INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USCINCSO

USMISSION USUN NY

S E C R E T GUATEMALA 5530

LIMDIS

EO 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, UK, BH, GT

SUBJ: BELIZE DISPUTE: BRITISH PLANS FOR REINFORCEMENT OF BELIZE
GARRISON

REF: GUATEMALA 5231 (NOTAL)

1. BRITISH CONSUL MCQUILLAN CALLED ON AMBASSADOR AT LATTER'S
REQUEST OCT 6 TO DISCUSS CURRENT STATUS OF BELIZE DISPUTE,
AND SAID HE WELCOMED OPPORTUNITY BECAUSE HE HAD INSTRUCTIONS
TO SEEK EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON HMG PROPOSALS FOR STRENGTHENING
BRITISH GARRISON IN BELIZE.

2. MCQUILLAN HAD RECEIVED TWO CABLES, THE FIRST APPARENTLY
ONLY A CONTINGENCY PLAN NOT FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION,
WHICH WOULD PROVIDE FOR ADDING A COMPANY OF BRITISH TROOPS TO
THE GARRISON AND STATIONING THEM IN SOUTHERN BELIZE. LONDON
SOUGHT VIEWS AS TO WHETHER, IN EVENT THIS BECAME NECESSARY,
PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SHOULD BE MADE AND IF SO WHETHER
AT BEGINNING OF TROOP MOVEMENT OR AFTER TROOPS IN PLACE.
(LONDON POINTED OUT THAT 10 DAYS WOULD BE NEEDED FOR ANY
MOVEMENT-7 TO PLAN AND 3 TO MOVE). HMG ALSO ASKED

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WHETHER ANNOUNCEMENT SHOULD SPECIFY A TIME LIMIT ON

PRESENCE OF ADDITIONAL TROOPS, TO WHICH MCQUILLAN RESPONDED THAT FIXING A DATE WOULD SIMPLY ENCOURAGE GOG TO MOVE AFTER THAT DATE.

3. SECOND CABLE PROPOSED SENDING TO BELIZE IN NEAR FUTURE THREE OR FOUR HELICOPTERS AND SOME RUBBER DINGHIES AND 30 TO 40 MEN TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THEM. IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE MEN WOULD BE ADDITIONAL TO PRESENT TROOP COMPLEMENT OR WHETHER THEY WOULD REPLACE MEN ALREADY THERE SO AS NOT TO GO BEYOND 600 MAN TOTAL UK HAS UNDERTAKEN NOT TO EXCEED. IN ANY EVENT NEW EQUIPMENT WOULD BE USED IN SOUTHERN BELIZE, WHICH BRITISH, AS DO WE, REGARD AS AREA OF MAXIMUM THREAT (REFTEL).

4. MCQUILLAN SHOWED AMBASSADOR RESPONSE HE HAD CABLED TO LONDON CONTAINING HIS OWN REACTIONS. HE SAID HE WAS STILL HOPEFUL THAT WITH EXERCISE OF A LITTLE HARD WORK AND RESTRAINT AT UNGA A RESOLUTION COULD BE AGREED UPON WHICH WOULD NOT RPT NOT PROVIDE GOG WITH EXCUSE FOR MILITARY ACTION. HOWEVER, EXCUSE WOULD CERTAINLY BE PROVIDED SHOULD UK REINFORCE BELIZE OR SEND IN MAJOR NEW EQUIPMENT. ANY SUCH ACTION WOULD BE GROSSLY EXAGGERATED IN GUATEMALA AND SEIZED UPON BY HAWKS AS PROOF THAT UK NOT INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATIONS. CONTINGENCY PLANNING SHOULD BE DIRECTED AT PERIOD AFTER UNGA TO DEAL WITH POSSIBILITY THAT RESOLUTION GOG REGARDS AS INTOLERABLE IS ADOPTED, AND PRECIPITOUS ACTION DURING UNGA SHOULD BE AVOIDED. HE REPEATED IN HIS CABLE HIS EARLIER ENDORSEMENT OF PROPOSAL TO INCREASE DURATION AND FREQUENCY OF VISITS BY BRITISH FRIGATE TO PUNTA GORDA. HE POINTED OUT THAT FRIGATE'S GUNS COULD EFFECTIVELY END USEFULNESS OF PUNTA GORDA AIRSTRIP.

5. AMBASSADOR SAID HE HAS NO INSTRUCTIONS ON POINTS RAISED BY MCQUILLAN AND COULD GIVE ONLY HIS PERSONAL VIEWS. HE AGREED WITH MCQUILLAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS. IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO GIVE THE IRRATIONAL ELEMENTS IN THE GOG A PRETEXT FOR INVASION. AT THE MOMENT, WITH DISCUSSIONS UNDER WAY IN NEW YORK, WITH BOTH MOLINA AND RICHARD SPEAKING OF THE NEED TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS, IT IS
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VERY DIFFICULT FOR THE GUATEMALANS TO INVENT ANY JUSTIFICATION FOR MILITARY ACTION. BUT IF UK VIOLATES WHAT GOG REGARDS AS SOLEMN PLEDGE NOT TO INCREASE ITS TROOP STRENGTH IN BELIZE, MODERATES WILL BE UNDERCUT AND MIGHT NOT BE ABLE RESTRAIN MILITARY. ADVANTAGES OF FRIGATE VISITS WERE THAT THEY HAD OCCURRED BEFORE AND COULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS NEW, THREATENING REINFORCEMENT, BUT THEY COULD NEVERTHELESS SERIOUSLY COMPLICATE GAUTEMALAN

PLANNING IN WHICH PUNTA GORDA PLAYS A KEY ROLE.

6. COMMENT: WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT UK CONCERN OVER STRENGTH OF THEIR FORCES IN BELIZE IS REFLECTION OF UNDERSTANDABLE CONCERN OF THOSE FORCES THEMSELVES OVER THEIR VULNERABLE POSITION. UNFORTUNATELY AND IRONICALLY, WE BELIEVE THEIR VULNERABILITY WOULD BE INCREASED RATHER THAN DECREASED BY ANY EFFORT TO REINFORCE THEM AT THIS TIME. THE DANGER THEY SEEK TO AVERT COULD BE PRECIPITATED.
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